

Understanding Solidarity through the Glasgow Rent Strikes 1915



Although Rents were an issue in Glasgow by 1913 when John Maclean and The British Socialist Party set up the *Scottish Federation of Tenants' Associations* the Strikes did not start until May 1915. Many peaceful activities were used to prevent evictions and drive out the Sheriff's officers with constant meetings in an attempt to be one step ahead of them. *"All manner of communication was used to summon help, everything from drums, bells, trumpets and anything that could be used to create a warning sound to rally the supporters who were mainly women as the men were at work in the yards and factories at these times. They would then indulge in cramming into closes and stairs to prevent the entry of the Sheriff's officers and so prevent them from carrying out their evictions. They also used little paper bags of flour, peasmeal and whiting as missiles directed at the bowler hatted officers."* **Radical Glasgow website about the 1915 Rent Strike**

The Woodcraft Folk recreated those times from eyewitness accounts through their craft work. They made – a papier mache Sheriff Officer, Window Campaign Posters, cast votes in their Union, and visited the key streets and districts by weaving the wool network. They recreated noises and actions used to stop delivery of the Notices of Ejectment.

Workshop 1 – Rent

Young people explored the theme through discussion of their own experiences at home of the following:

What is a home? What is Rent? What is a Tenant? What is a Landlord? Who coexists in the Rent



relationship? Who is powerful who is vulnerable? What is a Factor? What is a Notice of Eviction? What is Court? What is a Sheriff Officer?

Activity ; Papier mache 3D model of Factor Neilson, who owned many of the Linthouse and Partick properties.

Discussion – How can tenants create Rent Resistance to stop being thrown out of their home?

Activity Materials

2D Cardboard – draw around tall figure , paint

3D Papier Mache; cellopaste http://www.hope-education.co.uk/products/stationery/adhesives/specialist-adhesives/he280325_classmates-papier-mache-paste

Garden Cane for structure sellotape joins, bin-bag for bulk body, cover in newspaper and then coloured paper for papier mache.

Flour in paper bags

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Workshop 2 -Fake ID's

Often described through the roles and lives of key players evidence indicates that tenants themselves were the first to start off Petitions and spread the word. [Melling,1983;64] Therefore in teaching the Rent Strike History the role of unknown and often forgotten masses of people is crucial. This workshop gave young people the opportunity to act out Fake ID's taking on the daily



routines of well known and unknown activists. Using coloured wool they followed the routines of their Fake ID Character moving around and hooking up the wool strands at identified location zones created around the room. Some Fake Characters delivered milk or attended school or work, and others attended meetings or other social events. In this way they could build up a visible experience of a

network as their lives interlinked the wool strands creating a community weave where trust, information, direct action could be passed on.

Activity: Identified locations around the room, balls of wool different colours, Fake ID Cards

Solidarity

"Everyday established local networks were used by speakers to spread the word like the back court washhouse or the co-op meetings, the 'vibrancy of women's organising and strong lines of continuity over time and across different issues.' [J.J.Smyth].



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Meeting Places where trust and information could be built.

These networks were physically woven with strands of coloured wool to signify the growing tight solidarity between the individuals and families who travelled between them such as;

The Tenants Meetings	Carpet Factory
Glasgow Women's Housing Association	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
Independent Labour Party	Steamie at Harhill Street
The Co-operative Movement shops	Milners, Burleigh Street
Independent Labour Party	Telephone Exchange
Scottish Co-Operative Women's Guild	National Union of Miners
The Suffrage Campaign	Public Baths - Harhill Street
the Peace and Anti War movement	Ibrox Garage Transport Union Meeting
Shipyards- Fairfields	Clarion Scouts Cycling Club
Engineering works	Socialist Sunday school
Thermotank Engineering, Helen Street	Rope Works , Helen Street
Amalgamated Society of Shipwrights	Gas and General Workers Union
Electrical Trades Union	National Federation of Women Workers
Educational Institute of Scotland	Industrial Workers of the World
Associated Horsemen's Union, Greenock	Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union of Great Britain
Albion Motor Works, Scotstoun	
Women's Peace Crusade	Free Speech Committee

NB. The Fake ID Cards are fabricated, at times based on fact but fictional daily chores and lifestyles. Some biographical details are imaginary. Anyone who can work on this and correct anything please contact and I will update the cards online. These can be printed free for use. S.R.

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Workshop 3 – War and Government Munitions Factories



Part 1-This workshop built upon the previous experience of building trust through a social network to look closer at the working lives of the Fake ID Characters. Their roles in various War Industries – Shipyards, Engineering works, Motor Works and so on made them powerful if they threatened to withdraw their labour or down tools. Young people were given Union Membership cards turning the individual into a much larger and powerful force. I am 20,000 people. An injury to one is an injury to all.



Amalgamated Society
of Engineers

Part 2; Stop the Sherriff Officer!– The helpful design of the Tenement Close was discussed and how history records that the families organised themselves against the issue of the Notice of Ejectment. Fake ID's from previous workshops had allocated roles; Tenant, Union member, Lookout, Alarm Raiser, Secretary, Blockader, Demonstrator. In this Drama, the Landlord tries to increase the rent by using the law to serve a Notice of Ejection to the Tenant- the other characters must organise themselves to prevent this being delivered.

Part 2; Stop the Sherriff Officer!– The helpful design of the Tenement Close was



Activity; Lookouts raise alarm - Pots, Pans, Rattles, Blockades arrive with prams to the close - Flour bags, Prams, Demostrators block the entrances- at times workers in the Yards downed tools.

Things reach a head on 17th November at the Small Claims Court in Glasgow at the trial of 18 workers for eviction following rent arrears and Eviction notices. John Maclean and Helen Crawford amongst others made speeches. Sheriff Lee telephoned Lloyd George, Defence Minister and success is measured by the withdrawal of the court procedure– with the Act later passed to freeze all rents across Britain to pre-war levels – The Rent Restriction Act.

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Workshop 4 Role Play

This workshop celebrated the Centenary of the Rent Strikes 1915 by re-enacting the strategies of Eviction recorded in various accounts from the time.

Activity - Young people used the Papier Mache Factor to re-enact a case where flour and pease-meal was pelted at him, a 'rammy' was caused.



The End

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Booklist for further study

Joseph Melling, 1983, Rent Strikes-Peoples Struggle for Housing in the West of Scotland

Nan Milton, 2002, John Maclean

Kropotkin, 1906, the Conquest of Bread

Felix Dubois, @1894, the Anarchist Peril

Tom Bell, 1941, Pioneering Days

David Kirkwood, 1935, My Life of Revolt

Willie Gallagher, 1936, Revolt on the Clyde

J Bruce Glasier, 1921, William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement

Dave Lamb, 1977, Mutinies 1917 – 1920

The Island Book Trust, 2011 Aimhreit an Fhearainn, - The Land Struggles in Skye and Lewis

Dr Ann Petrie, 2008, the 1915 Rent Strikes An East Coast Perspective

Ed Ronald Black, 2001, An Lasair, Anthology of 18th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse

Ed Catherine Kerrigan, 1991, An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets

Jonathan Macdonald, Museum Manager, Museum of the Isles, Clan Donald Lands Trust <http://www.clandonald.com/heritage/archives-library/>

William M Adler, 2012, the Man Who Never Died, Bloomsbury USA

CD, Music, 1987, Flying Fish, 'IWW Rebel Voices'

CD Music, 1990, Smithsonian Folkways, 'Don't Mourn Organise'

IWW – Little Red Songbook

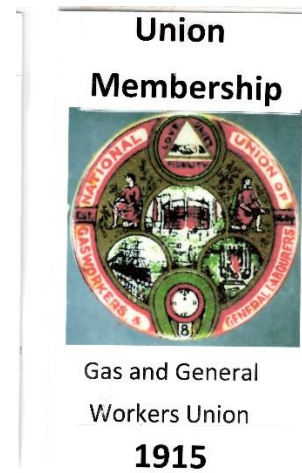
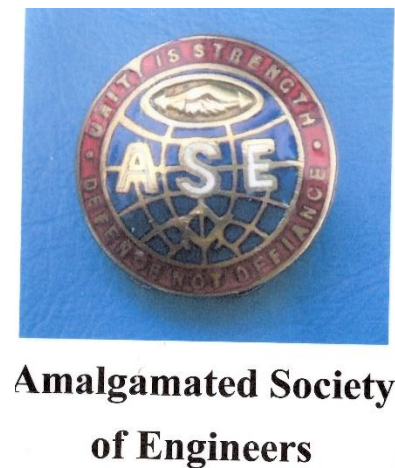
Film -Red Skirts on Clydeside, 1984, Director Jenny Woodley, Christine Bellamy, Sheffield Film Coop 40.37 minutes

Film -Behind The Rent Strike- Kirby Strike 1972, Director Nick Broomfield, 50 mins, <http://nickbroomfield.com/Behind-The-Rent-Strike>

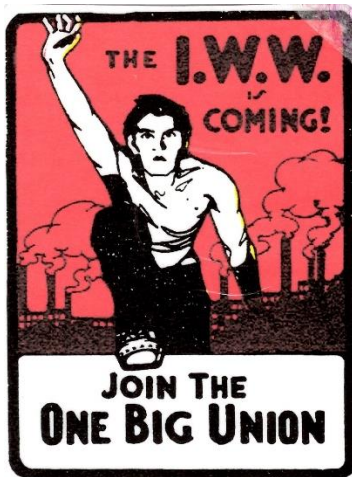
Film – Sylvia Pankhurst, Worldwrite – 90 minutes **ASIN:** B004QINSJ2

Images of Union Membership Cards

NB, These are reproduction and not historically accurate card designs.



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Industrial Workers
Of The World , (IWW)
Established in 1905



Clyde Workers Committee - Circumvented the inactivity of union leadership and acted in solidarity. Their Paper The Worker was shut down before issue 5 was printed. <http://contentdm.warwick.ac.uk/cdm/ref/collection/tav/id/3685>

<http://sites.scran.ac.uk/redclyde/redclyde/rc016a.html>

If anyone wishes to add more Anarchist info to this text or images then we will try to add it in. SoR, SR

Fake ID 1



Name		Mary Barbour
Age at 1915	40	Dates22.02,1875 – 02.04.1958
Address		Govan,
Place of Work		Thread Twister Carpet Factory
Family details	Links to AEU Unions	Married to David Barbour 1896 engineer 2 Sons aged under 19 years AEU members All work in Fairfields Shipyard
Family Network		Brothers and Sisters up to 6
Member of	Memberships	Member of the Kinning Park Cooperative guild
Actions Taken		Organised tenant committees and eviction resistance

Mary Barbour and Family Community Actions

Action 1 – Buy food in the Co-op at Govan X

Action 2 - Give husband and sons Union Members Notices to put up in Windows at Work.

Action 3 - Visit Renfrewshire by bus to see parents and spread the Window Campaign

Action 4 – Employ Mary Murphy to Wash clothes in the Steamie in Harhill Street

Action 5 – Husband and sons visit the football park and spread the word

Action 6- Travel to Carpet Factory on the bus 10 times for 1 weeks work

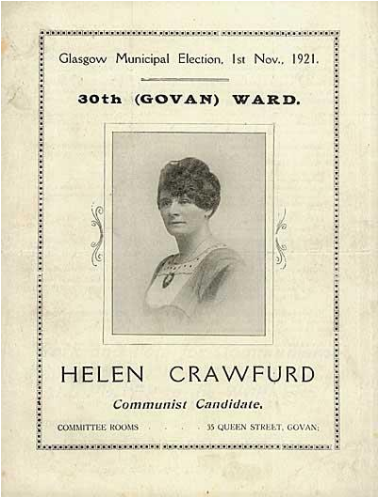
Action 7 – collect milk from Hughie on Milk Cart

Action 8 – Attend Kinning Park Cooperative Meeting

Action 9 – Attend Glasgow Women's Housing Association

Action 10- Husband and sons attends Engineering Union Meeting.

Fake ID 2



Name	Helen Crawford	
Age at 1915	Age 38	Dates 1877 – 1954
Address	The Manse Anderson	
Place of Work	Anderson slum area	
Family details	Married to Reverend Alexander Montgomerie Crawford died 1914 No children	
Family Network	3 sisters 3 brothers Father owns Bakery shops in Gorbals	
Member of	Memberships	Suffragettes, Communist Party ILP
Actions Taken	Secretary of Glasgow Women's Housing Association Militant Suffragette, imprisoned for smashing windows, inflammatory comments, 8 days hunger strike released under the Cat and Mouse Act. 20,000 industrial support from the <u>Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC)</u> . Rent Restrictions Act of 1915	

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Helen Crawford

Action 1 – Buy food in the Co-op at Govan X

Action 2 – Attend Suffragette Meetings by bus,
Glasgow city centre

Action 3 - Visit Renfrewshire by bus to see parents and
spread the Window Campaign

Action 4 – Employ Mary Murphy to Wash clothes in the
Steamie in Harhill Street, Govan

Action 5 – Meeting of Glasgow Women's Housing
Association, City Centre , Glasgow.

Action 6- Attend Meeting of the Independent Labour
Party in City Centre, Glasgow

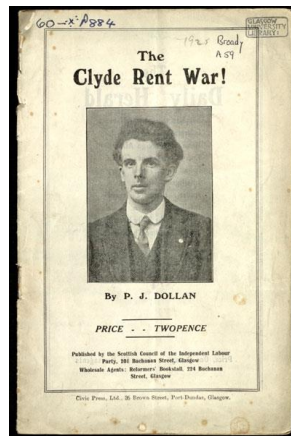
Action 7 – collect milk from Hughie on Milk Cart

Action 8 – Attend Kinning Park Cooperative Meeting

Action 9 – Buy Hat from Milner in Burleigh Street,
Govan

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Fake ID 3



Name		Agnes Dollan
Age at 1915	38	Dates 1887- 1966
Address		
Place of Work		worked in factory then telephone operator
Family details		James Dollan irish miner, wrote for Forward ILP Conchie Wormwood scrubs James 1913, journalist
Family Network		10 brothers and sisters, father blacksmith left school at eleven
Member of		Trade unionist and militant suffragette.
Actions Taken	Memberships	Treasurer of the Glasgow Womens Housing ass. Organised tenant cttees and eviction resistance Pacifist feminist and suffragette; Socialist politician; public antiwar protests throughout World War I; led local Women's International League 1915; co-founded Women's Peace Crusade 1916; jailed in rent protest 1917

Agnes Dollan

Action 1 – Buy food in the Co-op at Govan X

Action 2 – Attend Trade Union Meeting in City Halls, City centre , Glasgow

Action 3 - Get the bus to the Post Office Communications Union Meeting, Glasgow City Centre

Action 4 - Visit Renfrewshire by bus to see parents and spread the Window Campaign

Action5 – Employ Mary Murphy to Wash clothes in the Steamie in Harhill Street, Govan

Action 6 – Meeting of Glasgow Women's Housing Association, City Centre , Glasgow.

Action 7- Attend Meeting of the Independent Labour Party in City Centre, Glasgow

Action 8 – collect milk from Hughie on Milk Cart

Action 9 – Attend Kinning Park Cooperative Meeting

Action 10 – Husband attend Miners Union Meeting, Glasgow City centre

Action 11- Husband and Son attend the Public Baths in Harhill Street, Govan.

Action 12 – Take bus 10 times to telecom factory in Govan Rd.

Fake ID 4



Name	Mary Murphy	
Age at 1915	Dates	1880 – 1950
Address	13 Nethan Street , Govan	
Places of Work	Mary – Washer – woman, back closes in Govan Patrick - working in Cleansing Department at top of Helen Street, Govan	
Family details	Born in Pollokshields Married 1899 Patrick Murphy, immigrant farmer from Ireland Children - 8 children 2 die	
Family Network	6 Brothers and sisters	
Member of	Catholic Parish Church Member of Cooperative Society Women’s Peace Crusade	
Actions Taken	Rent refusal, Alarms, Pelting, Demonstrating	

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Mary Murphy, 13 Nethan Street, Govan

- Action 1 – Buy food in the Co-op at Govan X
- Action 2 – Attend Kinning Park Co-op Meetings
- Action 3 – Attend church, Govan
- Action 4 - Visit Pollokshields by bus to see parents and spread the Window Campaign
- Action 5 – Work in wash house at Rosneath Street
- Action 6 – Meeting of Glasgow Women's Housing Association, City Centre , Glasgow.
- Action 7- Work in wash house in Govan road
- Action 8- Work in Wash house in Elder Street
- Action 9 – Attend Kinning Park Cooperative Meeting
- Action 10- Husband and Son attend the Public Baths in Harhill Street, Govan.
- Action 11 Attend Womens Peace Crusade Meeting

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Fake ID 5



Name		Mary Clark	
Age at 1915	Age 20	Dates	1895 – 1980
Address		Roseneath Street, Govan	
Place of Work		Bus Conductress	
Family details		Single, living at home	
Family Network		Father – engineer/welder in Babcocks Mother - milner Two brothers (1 died) one sister	
Member of		Coop Kinning Park	
Actions Taken		Pass the Word	

Mary Clark

Action 1 – Buy food in the Co-op at Govan X

Action 2 – Attend dance Hall, City Centre, Glasgow

Action 3 - Visit Partick by bus to see grand parents and spread the Window Campaign

Action 4 – Gets milk from Hughie Milk Cart

Action 5 – Travels to Ibrox Garage Depot, Govan

Action 6- Travels to City Centre, Glasgow

Action 7 – Attend Kinning Park Cooperative Meeting

Action 8 – Transport Union Meeting, Glasgow, City Centre

Fake ID6



Name	Hughie McFlynn	
Age at 1915	Age 12	Dates 1905 – 1980
Address	867 Govan Road , Govan	
Place of Work	Delivery Boy for Ross’s local dairy milk cart	
Family details	Single, eldest child, living at home	
Family Network	Father – at war Mother - seamstress three brothers (1 died) 2 sisters	
Member of	Clarion Scouts Cycling Club Socialist Sunday School	
Actions Taken		

Hughie McFlynnne

Action 1 – Meet mother from work, Govan

Action 2 – Attend Socialist Sunday School, Govan

Action 3 – Deliver to Rosneath Street, Govan

Action 4 - Visit Pollokshaws by bus to see grandparents

Action5 – Employ Mary Murphy to Wash clothes in the Steamie in Harhill Street, Govan

Action 6 – Deliver milk to Nethan Street, Govan

Action 7- Deliver milk to Elder Street, Govan

Action 8 – Visit the Dairy Harmony Row, Govan

Action 9 – Attend Clarion Cycle Club, Glasgow

Action 10 – Attend public baths Harhill Street, Govan

Action 11 – Deliver milk to Albion Motors Factory South Street.

Fake ID7



Name		John Gallagher	
Age at 1915	Age 15	Dates	1900 – 1982
Address		12 Shaw Street, Govan	
Place of Work		Horse handler apprentice at Rope works, Helen Street, Govan	
Family details		Single, 4 sisters 2 brothers of family of 8	
Family Network		Father James and brothers – at war Mother , Alice – Thermotank engineer	
Member of		Football Team Associated Horsemen’s Union	
Actions Taken		Pass the Word	

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John Gallagher 12 Shaw Street

Action 1 – Attend football training, Kinning Park, 6 times

Action 2 – Attend dance hall in Glasgow in City Halls, City centre , Glasgow

Action 3 - Attend Thermotank to meet mother after work Govan

Action 4 - Visit Gorbals by bus to see grandparents and spread the Window Campaign

Action5 – Attend public baths in Govan

Action 6 – Attend Co-op to buy food, Govan

Action 7 – collect milk from Hughie on Milk Cart

Action 8 – attend meeting Associated Horsemen's Union